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STATE DOCUMENTS

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WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

MONTANA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Functions of the Montana Advisory Council on Children and Youth

Build programs and recommendations for action to enable the people of Montana, both young and old, to deal with major issues confronting our children and youth.

Stimulate better cooperation and coordination among agencies, organizations and groups concerned with children and youth on local, state and national levels.

Facilitate widespread involvement with children and youth issues through the implementation of local, district and regional workshops where it will be possible for our young people to work with "the establishment" in solving children and youth problems, and to plan for a relevant future.

Talk to one another and listen to what is said.

— THE GOVERNOR

WHY DOES THE MONTANA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXIST?

- Grew out of preparations made in Montana for the White House Conferences on Children and Youth
- Chance to see and discover what others are doing across Montana
- Provide a forum for exchange of information and views
- Define concerns and consider ways to create better life styles for young people
- Involve young people themselves in helping to decide on and implement changes
- Become effective in influencing positive social changes affecting children and youth
- Mix experience and realism with daring and idealism
- Give participants a chance to try out different approaches and processes with each other for how to work with groups at home

the montana advisory council on children and youth

- A tremendous diversity in membership exists
- MACCY is represented by members from every area of the State
- Held quarterly, meetings are two-day weekend gatherings because when the Council does get together there is a lot of territory to cover
- MACCY only backs something as a group when there is 100% concensus of the group but provides a great testing ground for **individual** ideas
- One-half of MACCY members are under 25 years old, and the other half are over 25 years old
- Those on the Council are encouraged to bring members of their family with them to meetings
- Some meetings are held in a "let's get away from it all" retreat-like atmosphere

Members take and pass on whatever they can use and/or appropriately share

- Each member is always listened to as HE IS IMPORTANT! Whether you're a member, alternate, associate or guest, you have a chance to make a contribution
- There is a de-emphasizing of lecture-type presentations, as lecturing uses a speaker and he is above all — we stay at an equal level. Also, the person who does the talking or teaching often learns the most. Therefore, if many people have a chance to talk, many are learning

what makes it unique?

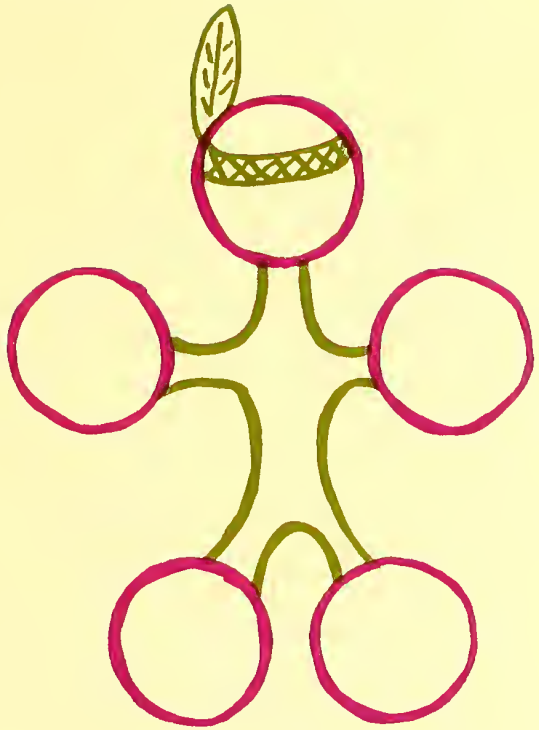
One of the most unique features of the Montana Advisory Council on Children and Youth is its tremendous opportunity to participate on a grass-roots level, and influence decisions that will affect children and youth in this State.

District organization stresses the importance of **creating public awareness** of local problems so that solutions can be implemented and hopefully, will be successful achievements. The mere fact that MACCY is organized on the basis of districts that cover the entire State facilitates reaching a representative cross-section of Montanans. This kind of representation allows MACCY to become aware of the various and diverse problems that face the children and youth of our State. MACCY serves to **disperse information, creative ideas** and **realistic solutions** that can be usefully implemented by individuals in their own local community or area.

The accomplishments of MACCY are not felt by motions or resolutions made at meetings but through programs and actions stimulated by group exposure. Thus Council meetings are measured by future response rather than the recording of well said words at meetings. MACCY strongly believes that it is of utmost importance to stress the involvement of people at the local level in doing things to improve their community. This furthers the "principle of 48 chiefs" and shared leadership. It also means that at the Council level **discussion** about issues is very important and needs to be kept open. **Decisions** about the issues are then often made in different ways at different local levels. This can hold more meaning for local communities than a Council decision might. MACCY members work to effect positive change in their own district as well as offer help and support to other districts.

MACCY has worked together as a group to support the section pertaining to "the rights of those persons under the age of majority" in becoming a part of the 1972 Montana Constitution. The total Council came to the general concensus that this step would be an excellent way to better the status of children and youth, and thus it was decided to support the action as a Council. That section of the Constitution will be very important in the future as it touches the lives of all Montanans, and it will also serve as a precedent for others to legally recognize the rights of children.

grass roots participation



the principle of "48 chiefs"

The principle of "48 chiefs" means we are all equally important to the functioning of MACCY, and it makes it possible for each and every person to be completely open with one another. It is the principle of shared leadership which allows each individual to participate in the planning and execution of some part of our meetings, and to have the responsibility of a leadership role. It also means that a wise idea may carry more weight than a poor one, but the people each have the same power to judge among the ideas presented and choose the one that fits — or modify into one solution without feeling a prior committment to work toward a specific outcome.

The Council has a coordinator who is responsible for organizing meetings, dispersing information between gatherings, conducting workshops and many other duties necessary to the smooth running of the Council. MACCY agrees that the Council could not function properly without the work of this coordinator. People should not be misled though, because the coordinator is guided by the chiefs' inputs and is not a "chief of chiefs." It is also very important that MACCY members all feel that they have free and equal access to this coordinator whose job is to serve them, to coordinate and help — not supervise and control.

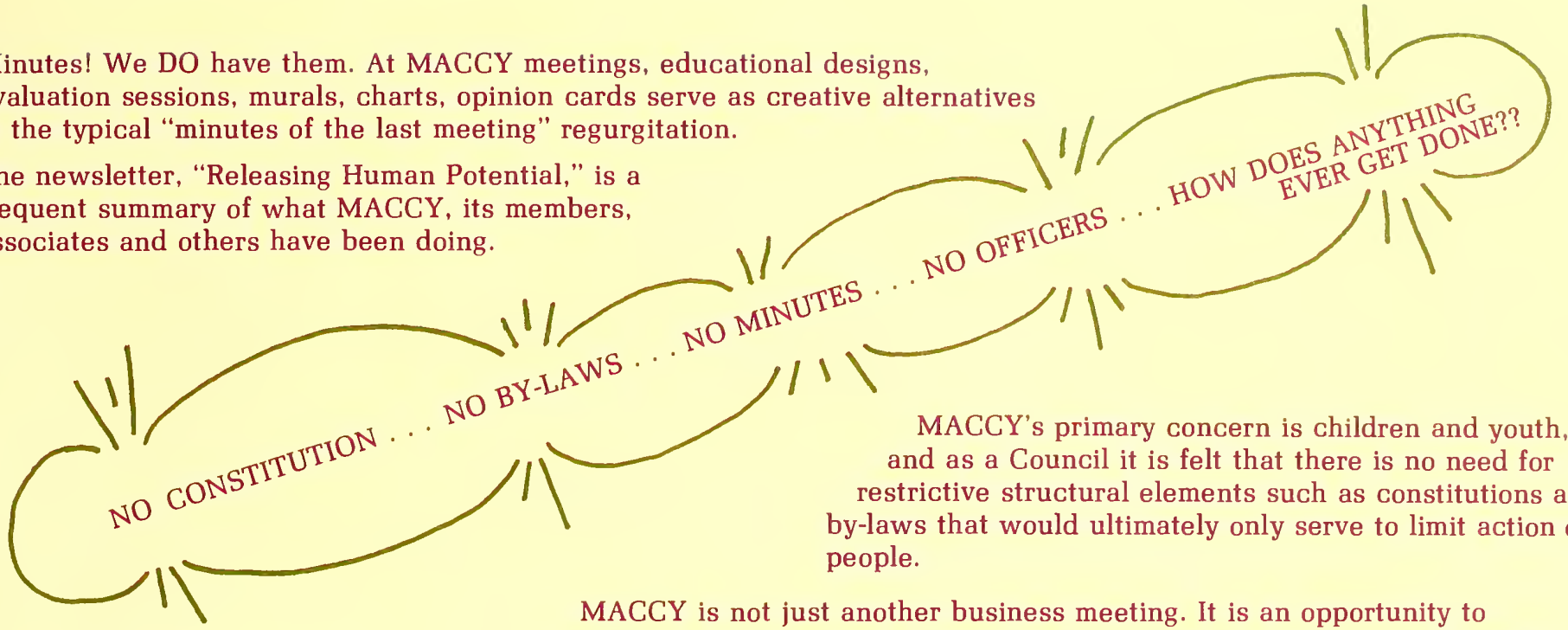
CHILDREN FIRST — **human potential and human needs are our primary functions.** We can never let these out of our mind if we, MACCY, expect to achieve anything as a group.

Each person is important to the success of MACCY — when we start to put down one person's opinion and make another's ideas unimportant then MACCY has failed. If we aren't given equal rights in MACCY, how can we strive to gain them for others?

MACCY places a great deal of emphasis on fulfilling individual needs and drawing upon individual potential, which in turn stimulates cooperation and coordination among ourselves, outsiders and different organizations. It gives each of us the responsibility to speak and listen to others needs. It takes the emphasis off "self" and puts it on "others."

Minutes! We DO have them. At MACCY meetings, educational designs, evaluation sessions, murals, charts, opinion cards serve as creative alternatives to the typical "minutes of the last meeting" regurgitation.

The newsletter, "Releasing Human Potential," is a frequent summary of what MACCY, its members, associates and others have been doing.



MACCY's primary concern is children and youth, and as a Council it is felt that there is no need for restrictive structural elements such as constitutions and by-laws that would ultimately only serve to limit action or people.

MACCY is not just another business meeting. It is an opportunity to help each other grow in knowledge and concern for children and youth.

The Council doesn't have formal meetings, which stimulates a very open and free interaction to take place between all those present. This way no one is out of order, thus allowing everyone to speak and be heard. This type of meeting is very supportive, in that each person has the opportunity to grow confident of his individual worthiness and ability to contribute to the whole through the understanding and patience that comes from being listened to by others who are sincerely interested in what each person thinks and feels. Sometimes a question contributes as much to the group's thinking as a suggested solution does.

Lay people are as important to the process as professional people because they often understand the point of view of their fellow citizens at home better and can therefore bring a different light to the discussion.

It should be stressed though, that no one in the Council is ever forced or put under pressure to speak — often it is possible to learn more from silence or from listening to others.

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Prepared for You by . . .

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and

Based on frequent discussions and comments
by MACCY members, alternates, associates,
consultants and interested persons.

How Do You Become a MACCY Member?

The Montana Advisory Council on Children and Youth is created by the Governor by Executive Order. In each of twelve multi-county districts, the Governor appoints one woman, one man, one young woman and one young man for two-year terms.

Functions of the Council are stated in the letter of appointment and in this publication. It is expected that the Council and individual members will be in frequent communication with the Governor's Office, providing feedback on how the functions of the Council are being carried out.

In making appointments, consideration is given to a set of criteria aimed to achieve a cross-section of the State's population. Membership shifts from time to time in order to give experience and obtain ideas from a broader base of persons.

If you wish to serve on the Council, write a letter to the Governor. You will be expected to fill out an Information Reply Form which will be checked with the criteria and with any vacancies there may be in your district. Groups or individuals may also write to the Governor to suggest a person to serve on MACCY.